

Enlightenment by OverOnTheBench

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Coming Out, Coming of Age, F/M, Gen, Love Triangles, M/M, One-Sided Attraction, Other, Sexuality Crisis, Superpowers, Teen Angst, Telepathy, Underage Drinking, Weddings, Will Byers Can't Catch a Break

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Summary:

Joyce Byers and Jim Hopper are getting married on October 24th, 1988, and it should have happened a long time ago.

For Will, sharing a house with two more people is the least of his worries. Jonathan is gone, his friends seem to be splintering apart, and now suddenly he can hear the thoughts of other people. Specifically, one other person. A normal life doesn't seem to be in the cards for him after all.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hi hello I love Will Byers and I wanted to write about him, I really hope you enjoy this story that's been knocking around my head!

Follow me on tumblr @derry-hawkins for more Stranger Things and IT content - you can even request stories if you like!

Every inch of Will Byers itched. He rubbed his puffy eyes vigorously, leaning into the current of the oscillating fan. Sweat dripped down his back and only exacerbated his prickling, irritated skin. August always brought hay fever and a cloudy mind for him, and this summer in particular, it was annoying. Seventeen was far too old for heat rashes and scratchy, streaming eyes, too old for calamine lotion and his mother's fussing - not that she had time for his stupid issues, anyway.

The fan gave an emphatic rattle before shutting off with a pathetic whoosh, and Will groaned, setting down his sketchpad. He heard the refrigerator and washing machine whine and fall silent, leaving him in silence but for the clacking of the screen door opening and closing slightly in the soft breeze, too light to provide any real comfort. It was the third time in as many days that the power had failed in the extreme heat. Will struggled to get out of the indent in the couch formed by hours of immobility, and trudged into the kitchen to reset the fuses. Even after flipping the switches, the power stayed off.

On the kitchen counter sat an open can of beer, and Will regarded it with narrowed eyes. The white can with the Schlitz logo seemed to take up a lot of space in the room, and he felt he could smell it from a few feet away. He closed the fuse box and went over to the counter, picking up the can. It was mostly full, and he paused only briefly before lifting it to his mouth. The lukewarm bitterness assaulted his tongue, and his nose wrinkled, but he forced himself to drink the entire contents of the can, coughing and violently crushing the can

when he was done. How the fuck did Hopper drink this stuff?

Well, maybe it wasn't meant to be drunk warm.

Will tossed the crushed can in the general direction of the trash, and stole a new can from the still-silent fridge before walking out the front door to his bike. His prickly skin intermingled with the resentment that had been simmering since February, driving him to get as far from his suffocating house as humanly possible.

The next thing he knew, he was on the shore of the quarry lake. A low whooping bird call echoed off the rocks. Will let his bike lean on a boulder and stripped to his boxers, sighing as the breeze wicked sweat from his back. For the first time in weeks his mind felt unfettered. He'd crawled out from under the weight of his family for just a little while, left behind a pile of invitations and catalogs and orders for catering and flowers that he just couldn't look at anymore.

He took a few slow steps into the cool water, pebbles pressing into his feet. Less than four years ago they'd pulled his fake body out of this lake, and this was one of the many times that he was certain he'd never come back. Most other people still acted like he'd died in November of 1983. Well, if he was honest, Hawkins had never made him feel welcome, but becoming a zombie boy just gave them a tangible reason to shun him, outside of "Lonnie's kid acts weird".

Lonnie's kid. Why the fuck did people still call him that? As if he'd ever been *Lonnie's kid*. As if Lonnie had ever wanted him. What a crock of shit.

Without any thought, Will dove under the clear water and screamed, bubbles erupting from his mouth, the sound too muffled to be very satisfying. When he was out of breath, he resurfaced and gasped for air.

"Bullshit," he spat, raising his voice. "Everyone in this town is bullshit! Hear that, Hawkins? Zombie Boy thinks you're all bullshit! *Fucking cowards!*"

His voice echoed sharply off the steep rock walls, and he didn't care

that nobody heard. He wouldn't have cared if half the town walked by right then, either.

"Fuck you, Hawkins!"

"Will?"

He barely caught himself from falling backwards into the water, spinning around with fists clenched. On the stony embankment stood none other than Jane Hopper, who was simultaneously the last person and only person he wanted to talk to.

"What are you doing here, El?" he said in the most surly tone he could muster. His hair dripped into his face, and he could only hope it disguised his furious tears.

"I was biking home and I heard you yelling," she said with a shrug, pushing her giant sunglasses up her forehead. "I thought you might be in trouble or something, but I can let you have your hormonal breakdown in peace if you want."

Will scowled. "I am not having a *hormonal breakdown*."

"I'm not making fun of you. Sometimes you just gotta scream. It happens to me too." She toed off her Chucks and socks, and steered her bike over to where Will's was parked. He cringed when she glanced into his basket. "Wow, Will Byers is being a rebel."

"Hardly," he snapped. "Just toss it to me."

The Schlitz floated out of the basket and dropped into the water just beyond his outstretched hand. God, she was obnoxious.

"Dad would murder you," she said as she walked into the water.

"Over one beer? Sounds like his problem." Will cracked open the can and went bottoms-up, ignoring the nagging voice of his mother and Jonathan and Hopper. Seriously, it was one beer, why should he feel guilty? He never caused trouble - well, not that he could control. Will Byers Breaks A Rule, Big Fucking Deal.

"Dustin and I saw Mike at the arcade," El said, and he stiffened.

"Yeah?"

"He asked about you."

"And what'd you tell him?"

"The truth."

Will's stomach churned. "The truth about what?"

"...Just that you'd been in a funk for weeks and I didn't know why." El frowned and waded in further, the hem of her blue sundress floating around her. "And I said he should come over."

"Why the hell would you say that?"

"First of all, he's my boyfriend, mouthbreather, I can have him over if I want. Second, I don't know what happened between you two, but you need to get the hell over it. You're really going to let some stupid teenage crap get in the way of lifelong friendship? That doesn't sound like you at all, Will. The way you've been acting all summer...none of this is you."

El's words stung more than he cared to admit. He glanced down at the now-empty beer can.

"...I dunno," he eventually mumbled.

"You dunno about what?"

"About me. I dunno what's wrong with me." He looked up at her. "Since Jonathan went back to New York, and since..."

"Since they got engaged," El offered, smiling. "Yeah. Believe me, it isn't exactly easy for me either."

"I know it's not. I'm sorry I've been so weird."

“You’ve been weird the whole time I’ve known you. And I’m not one to talk.” El used her powers to splash him. He splashed back, her long curls falling into her eyes, and it quickly devolved into a water fight, Will sputtering and laughing as he tried to pounce on El and found himself propelled through the air and landing in the middle of the lake. The water soothed his itching and freed him to laugh and smile and swim after her as fast as he could, lungs full and mind clear of the fog that had been looming all summer.

As the sun set and he was biking home with his (almost) stepsister, he’d even forgot about Mike, until they rode down the driveway and he saw his oldest friend’s car parked behind his mother’s.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

Dinner and drawing.

Every door and window in the Byers house was flung wide open to invite in the slightest puff of fresh air, but Joyce moved through the stuffy kitchen effortlessly, in her element, preparing dinner for the troupe of teens in her living room. El had just switched on MTV to fill the gaps in conversation, and Will stared aggressively at Boy George on the screen, but it couldn't distract him from the sensation of Mike Wheeler's gaze zeroed in like the fucking Death Star on his face. His presence had always been large and direct in his mind's eye; he took up so much room in his mind when he was around, his voice and laugh filling his ears, demanding Will's full attention, which he willingly gave, content to be overwhelmed and downright stupid when his friend was around.

But why did Mike have to *think* so loudly, too?

Nancy cleared her throat, drawing him out of his intense concentration on the music. Immediately, Mike was in his head and he could hardly hear her question.

"Have you guys started working on college applications?"

El saved him from having to answer first. "Yeah, I've got a few places in mind, but I think I'll end up at Purdue. It isn't far away, and they have a really good veterinary program. I'm not sure if that's exactly what I want to do yet, but...it sounds right."

“You’d be a great vet,” Nancy said, beaming at the younger girl. “I’m so proud of you.”

Will didn’t hear any of it. He was sweating through his Smiths t-shirt, eyes glazed and locked onto Mike’s Doc Martens, *who the fuck wears Docs when it’s 90 degrees?* unable to listen to anything else.

Purdue, Mike was thinking. *How far is that from Chicago? Two hours? That isn’t so bad, I guess. It isn’t half a mile, though. I guess I won’t really see El...or Lucas, he’s going to Michigan for football...what about Will? What if he goes to New York like Jonathan and Nancy? Didn’t he mention California once last year? Fuck, that would be so awful, I’d have to take a plane just to see him...but what if he doesn’t want me to? He’s said maybe three words to me since he got here, what if he never wants to talk to me again? He just blew up at the end of school and it’s been getting worse ever since. What am I gonna do...? Will, c’mon. Will, I wish you’d just look at me, Will, Will, LOOK AT ME.*

Mike practically screamed in Will’s mind, and forgetting himself, his head shot up. Will’s stomach flipped, betraying him, the sight of Mike’s eyes overwhelming.

What the fuck, he heard. *It’s like he heard me...no, don’t be stupid.*

Cursing his reddening face, Will quickly turned away, just in time to hear Nancy go, “What about you, Will?”

“Well, uh,” he stammered, “I know it’s a stretch, but I really like University of Chicago. They have a cool computer science

program...”

“I don’t think it’s a stretch,” El said. “Your grades are definitely good enough.”

“Hey, Mike wants to go to school in Chicago, too,” said Nancy. “Did you guys plan that?”

Will and Mike glanced at each other again, both stammering, until Mike finally spoke - “Kinda.” And Will, despite himself, smiled.

The awkward group was interrupted by the back door slamming shut, and Joyce’s cheery exclamation, “There you are! Mike and Nancy are here.” Jim Hopper meandered into the room, exhausted eyes overshadowed by his grin.

“Long time no see,” he said, sitting in his usual chair, closest to Will. Immediately, the entire room seemed to exhale, and Will’s muscles relaxed as the intrusions in his mind dulled. “What are we watchin’? Oh, MTV, I guess that was a stupid question. Mind if I turn on the news quick? We had a pretty crazy afternoon.”

“Good crazy or bad crazy?” El asked as she flipped the channel.

“Little bit of both, kiddo, like most of life.”

The news anchors told the tale of the largest drug bust in the history

of Roane County, showing footage of police cruisers racing down a wide road and unrolling yellow tape around a dilapidated house. Then the face of Officer Steve Harrington appeared, and he struggled to remain stone-faced as the reporter questioned him.

“People are a lot safer tonight with these perpetrators behind bars, and with the help of the Roane County Sheriff and Indiana state troopers, we’ve gotten hundreds of kilograms of cocaine off the streets and out of our local schools,” he said, clearly unable to keep from smiling. Mike and Nancy laughed when Jim rolled his eyes.

“Harrington’s got some big britches,” he grumbled, “but his heart’s in the right place. He did good today. One of the bastards came up behind us with a knife and he caught him and beat him senseless. Probably the first time he’s ever won a fight...”

Joyce had appeared in the doorway, face ruddy from the heat of the stove, and was scowling at the television as if it had insulted her. “I hate when you get into these big dangerous situations. You should have called me, or gotten me on the radio or something-”

“Hey, hey, I was never in any danger.”

“You just said there was guy with a knife creeping up behind you-!”

“Yeah, and he didn’t stab anyone!” Jim got up and embraced her tightly and kissed her forehead, laughing as she punched him in the arm. Will looked on, wondering if he’d ever seen his mother so happy, and thanked his lucky stars for Jim Hopper for the umpteenth time.

“Something smells good,” Mike said loudly, earning a smack on the arm from his sister. Will didn’t mind the heat anymore.

Will was naturally quiet. His life was full to the brim with forceful, raucous people, and he cherished them, loved their laughter, knew their screams and whispers by heart...it was all quite tiring. Once he’d washed the dishes, he escaped to his room, leaving the door just barely open. Jonathan’s “December ‘85” mixtape was already in his boombox, and he flipped it on before settling at his desk, chair creaking under him. Tears for Fears started playing, and with walls between him and Mike, he got a true taste of peace for the first time in hours. He took an older sketchbook out of a drawer and thumbed through it, searching for a blank page, but almost immediately got caught up in the memories on each page.

The sketchbook was nearly two years old, a Christmas present from Lucas, pages still mostly unbent. The paper was thick and smooth and made a wonderful swishing sound when he turned the pages. He only used it for work he really cared about. The pages were full of completed drawings that used the high-end markers and colored pencils he’d spent all his savings on. There were even a few watercolor pieces, like the painting of Merrill’s farm and the one of downtown Hawkins. Most of his art was of his friends and their Dungeons and Dragons characters. He flipped to the draft of the character sheet he’d done for Max. It was one of his favorites-he’d worked for ages in his practice book to get Max’s facial features just right, find exactly the right color for her hair, design her clothes, and when he’d finally given Max the finished product, she was so happy with it that she put it in a plastic sleeve for safekeeping, and she’d hugged him so tight he thought he’d broken a rib.

Will's pulse picked up when he got towards the back of the book. These were the drawings he'd never show to anybody, even at gunpoint, and they were the reason he kept his sketchbook in a locked drawer. Most were done late at night, or when he was the only one in the house and Bowie was blasting loud enough to deafen anyone who came near. He didn't draw Mike often, but when he got the urge to, he threw himself into it, hours flying by and becoming entire days. Over time he'd perfected Mike's features, and it showed from the first sketch to the last. The last used page was a close portrait that Will had worked on over the course of three days, hell-bent on capturing every detail of his face as he'd seen it at a Saturday night party Dustin had thrown in May, down to his cupid's bow and the position of his freckles. At the bottom, he'd written "Michael Edward Wheeler" in pencil.

Some scraps of paper remained caught in the book's rings from the time last year he'd torn out a sketch of him and Mike kissing. He'd shoved it under an old textbook in his locked drawer and never looked at it again.

As he was picking out the paper scraps, a light knock on the door made him jump out of his skin. He slammed the sketchbook shut and got up to greet whoever was at the door-

Mike.

"Hey," he said softly, his hands stuffed into his pockets, looking intently at something just to the right of Will.

"Hi," Will replied once he'd regained control of his mouth, stepping

aside to let Mike in. No matter how much time he spent with his oldest friend, he still marvelled at how tall he'd grown and his unruly curls and *shut up Will*.

He knew Mike was nervous. Nervous and confused and profoundly upset. He could see it plainly on his face even without being able to read his damn mind.

"So, um," he started, voice flat as he sat on Will's bed as if no time had gone by. "It's been a while."

"Yeah. It has."

"It's been a weird summer." Mike smiled with cloudy eyes. "First one I've spent without my best friend since we were what, four? Five?"

"Mike-"

"No," he interrupted, looking directly at Will. "I...I know you're probably still pissed, so just let me say what I need to say before you kick me out, alright? I know that I was a douche back in June when El and I were on and off. I said some really stupid shit that I didn't mean, but...I still don't fully understand what happened or why you got so mad when you did. And I don't expect an explanation or anything, that's perfectly okay, I'm sure you had a good reason, b-but I miss you every day, Will, and if we stopped being friends because of my big idiot frog mouth, that'd just be wrong, so please, please let me ma-"

“God, shut up, Wheeler,” Will said, finally allowing himself to grin, and Mike still seemed petrified, but then Will practically flew at him and they both fell back on the bed, Will fake- punching him and Mike laughing and yelling “fuck you”, weakly fighting back. Eventually he flipped Will onto his back and pinned him, and an *oh shit* alarm sounded in his brain, but Mike was obviously not gifted with the power of telepathy as he was and seemed content to keep pinning his friend down.

“I’m sorry too,” Will said quietly. “I was just...overthinking things. I took things out on you and that wasn’t cool. You deserve better.”

Mike snorted. “No I don’t. It doesn’t get better than Will Byers. Everyone knows that. ‘Sides, ‘crazy together’, remember? If you’re going through stuff, you can tell me.”

“Crazy together. Yessir.”

“Neato, speedo. C’mon, Nancy brought over lemon bars.”

“If I’d heard you say ‘neato, speedo’ a few years ago, I would have thought you’d lost it.”

“Fuck off.” Mike got up and went back out to the kitchen, and Will took a moment to retreat into himself, to cement the scene and the sensations in his mind lest he forget, but how could he possibly? He’d never forget a minute of Mike Wheeler.

“Will?”

“Yeah, coming, dude,” he answered, and went after Mike, closing the door and leaving the sketchbook on his desk.

Notes for the Chapter:

Next chapter will feature the rest of the party, and delve more into the story behind Will's powers. Thank you so much for reading. Feel free to visit me at derry-hawkins.tumblr.com too.